



City of Santa Clara Campaign 2006

Ethics in government begins at the ballot box

Every vote counts in building public trust and confidence in government

Survey identifies how public wants candidates to behave

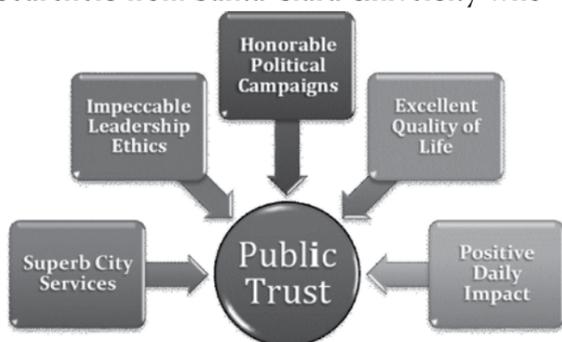
Only a small number of cities in the nation have the courage and commitment to ask citizens questions about their trust of local government and the ethics of local leaders – and Santa Clara is one of them, according to researchers from Santa Clara University who recently conducted a survey to determine what leadership behaviors are most important to local residents.

“Public trust is very much at risk during campaigns for office,” explained Thomas E. Shanks, Ph.D., a professor at Santa Clara University and head of the research team. “Most residents have very clear ideas about acceptable and unacceptable campaign behavior. Voters are looking for candidates who know the difference between right and wrong and act from that knowledge.”

Survey participants identified several behaviors they did NOT want to see in Santa Clara leadership and political campaigns:

- Do not launch unfair attacks on individuals or groups
- Do not advance narrow political or personal interests or ambitions
- Do not blame someone or some group unfairly
- Do not take credit for something that many people had a hand in creating
- Do not support a person, policy or issue by overstating, understating, fabricating, denying or evading the truth of these results

“Candidates don’t just have to worry about winning,” Shanks said. “They have to understand that they have an obligation to do no further harm to public trust and confidence in government because of their actions during a campaign.”



Honorable election campaigning is a key element in building public trust and confidence in government.



Ethics and Values Program a top priority in Santa Clara

Eight years ago, the City of Santa Clara established an Ethics and Values Program to develop a practical guide to help City officials be “at their best” everyday as ethical and values-centered leaders. After an extensive public process, the City Council adopted a new Code of Ethics and Values in 2000.

From the beginning, the mission of the Ethics and Values Program was to foster public trust and confidence in the City’s government and services by promoting and maintaining the highest standards of professional conduct among elected and appointed officials, City staff, and City volunteers.

A special effort was launched in 2000 to include candidates and their supporters in the Ethics and Values Program. Workshops on ethical campaign strategies and tactics are now held before and after each election, and candidates are asked to pledge they will conduct ethical campaigns.

The Vote Ethics publication and other communication activities this fall are designed to help voters make the ethics and core values of candidates important criteria in selecting who will get their vote.

More information about the Ethics and Values Program is available on the City’s website at www.ci.santa-clara.ca.us.

What are the most important behaviors City leaders ought to practice in order to deepen public trust and public confidence?

The survey said...

- Honesty
- Dependability
- Financially prudent
- Acting with integrity
- Responsibility
- Impartiality
- Accountability

City of Santa Clara Code of Ethics & Values
Ethical
Professional
Service-Oriented
Fiscally Responsible
Organized
Communicative
Collaborative
Progressive

Citizen checklist for evaluating candidates

As best as you can tell, have the candidates you are favoring ...

- Told the truth about themselves?
- Focused on issues relevant for Santa Clara?
- Told truths about opponents that were important for voters to know?
- Pointed out differences between themselves and opponents that are relevant to the political office?
- Treated opponents with dignity and respect?
- Fought fairly and avoided demeaning or irrelevant personal attacks?
- Never tried to confuse or mislead voters?
- Clearly identified who was behind any committee that is candidate controlled?
- Took responsibility for any mistakes they made or mistakes made by volunteers or consultants?
- Criticized unfair, dishonest or disrespectful attacks by committees not controlled by the candidate?
- Kept their Vote Ethics promises?

